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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed actual use of one type of utterance, the request, at service counters at Southern Illinois University and compared the findings to the request forms found in four commercially available English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) textbooks that emphasize communicative competence. It also compared the requests of native and non-native English-speakers. Subjects included faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students, and students' spouses. Requests were categorized as need statements, mitigated need statements, imperatives, imbedded imperatives, permission directives, question directives, and hints. Results indicate that while native speakers used question directives significantly more than other request types, non-native speakers did not show such a preference, choosing question directives and permission directive equally. Mitigated need statements were used more by non-native speakers. Textbooks did not generally include the wide range of request types used in authentic conversation, and did not contain enough clear explanation of variables affecting choice of request type. The limited number of forms also did not reflect the most common forms in actual conversation. Implications for classroom teaching are discussed briefly. Contains 48 references. (MSE)

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AUTHENTICITY IN ESL: A STUDY OF REQUESTS

by

Toyoko Y. Schmidt

Bachelor of Art in Sociology

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Please look at this paper by tomorrow, Dr. X ", says a non-native speaker, adding her thirty page draft to an already towering stack of student papers on the professor's desk. "Excuse me, do you mind if I ask you to lend me your pen for a second?", another non-native speaker asks his roommate, with whom he has been living for three months. These requests sound strange in these particular situations. Although they are grammatically well-formed, both are lacking appropriateness — the former sounds too forceful and inconsiderate, the latter too polite and even sarcastic. These requests are likely to be made by ESL learners trying to communicate as sincerely and politely as they can. Even advanced learners of English, who have achieved a high level of linguistic competence, may have inadequate pragmatic competence, leading to inappropriate utterances in particular situations.

Fukushima & Iwata's (1985) study of politeness in English revealed that advanced Japanese learners frequently used "please" to express politeness. They added "please" to make distinctions between requests to teachers and friends, e.g., "Please don't wear jeans" to a teacher and "Don't wear jeans" to a friend, while native speakers used various strategies like "hedging", being indirect, and impersonalization of speaker and hearer. In fact, many ESL learners are taught to add "please" and modals "can/could/will/would + you" to imperatives in making polite requests. Tanaka & Kawade (1982), who examined politeness strategies of nonnative speakers of English, found that learners were able to judge the degree of politeness conveyed by a given sentence, but did not always use politeness strategies in a manner similar to native speakers in actual communication.

Reasons for this are complicated. Many studies investigating the pragmatic competence of second language learners necessary for appropriate communication, suggest that pragmatic failure occurs when language learners transfer pragmatic knowledge in their native language to the second language. A proper request in one culture may be rude in another. Expressions with equivalent referential meanings in two

languages may have very different social meanings (Narita, 1992).

However, is the transfer of pragmatic knowledge from the native language the only difficulty? Is it possible that the language models provided in ESL textbooks do not always accurately reflect authentic language use? This question, which has not received a great deal of attention in the field, is a major focus of this paper.

This study presents the request utterances collected in a university setting. It examines: (1) types of requests used at service counters at an American university; (2) differences between native-speaker and non-native speaker requests, if any; and (3) request forms used by native-speakers in comparison with those presented in ESL textbooks.

A. Communicative competence

In recent years, the focus of language teaching has been placed on the facilitation of learners' communicative competence. The acquisition of linguistic competence—vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax—which had been the dominant approach to language learning (e.g., the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct method, and Audiolingual Method) is reconsidered as only a partial account of the knowledge required to use a language. The knowledge of the rules of language use and communicatively appropriate performance (communicative competence) is now thought to be a large part of language learning (Schmidt & Richards, 1980, p. 129).

Hymes (1972a) was one of the first to define the term "communicative competence." He views language behavior in terms of appropriateness and correctness (Hoekje & Williams, 1992); the ability to speak competently requires not only knowing grammatical rules of the language, but also knowing what to say, to whom, in what circumstances, and in what manner — e.g., use of stress and intonation (Scarcella & Brunak, 1981). Hymes (1972a) states that in learning a language, children

> acquire knowledge of a set of ways in which sentences are used. From a finite experience of speech acts and their interdependence with sociocultural features, [children] develop a general theory of the speaking appropriate in their community, which they employ, like other forms of tacit cultural knowledge (competence), in conducting and interpreting social life (p. 279).

Gumperz (1972, p. 205, cited in Wardhaugh, 1986, p. 241) explains communicative competence in this way: "whereas linguistic competence covers the speaker's ability to produce grammatically correct sentences, communicative competence describes his ability to select, from the totality of grammatically correct expressions available to him, forms which appropriately reflect the social norms governing behavior in specific encounter." Canale and Swain (1980) proposed three components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence, which Canale (1983, cited in Hoekje & Williams, 1992) later elaborated as grammatical competence (the understanding of vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax), sociolinguistic competence (the knowledge of speech acts and the appropriate use of language), discourse competence (the ability to produce coherent and cohesive texts) and strategic competence (the ability to enhance communication or deal with breakdowns in it). Some linguists, having examined the development of speech acts in children before the age of one, have concluded that knowledge of communicative function precedes true language (Schmidt & Richards, 1980). Bruner (1978, p. 49) explained that learning a first language is a problem-solving transaction in which mother and infant engage in order to learn "how to make our intentions known to others, how to communicate what we have in our consciousness, what we want done on our behalf, how we wish to relate to others, and what in this or other worlds is possible." Dore (1975, p. 21) suggested that "the speech act is the basic unit of linguistic communication" and the child's pragmatic intentions gradually become grammaticalized as semantic and syntactic structures."

B. Speech acts and speech events

Communicative competence theory includes a range of different dimensions of language behaviors among individuals and speech communities; acquiring speech acts is one aspect of communicative competence in language learning (Schmidt & Richards, 1980). Searle (1969) hypothesized that speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior, that is, "speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on . . . and these speech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication" (p. 16). Searle (1976) classified language functions into five types: "directives", representing a speaker's attempts to get a hearer to do something (requests, suggestions, and commands); "commissives", representing a speaker's commitments to do something (promises and threats); "representatives", committing the speakers to the truth or falsity (assertions, claims, suggestions, denials, etc.); "declaratives", representing an act that causes changes in the world through their successful execution; and "expressives", expressing feelings and attitudes (apologies, thanks, regrets, etc.).

Hymes(1972b) has proposed a useful distinction between "speech situations", "speech events", and "speech acts" in order to represent our language use. Within a community there are many speech situations, such as fights, meals, parties; however, because such situations are not in themselves governed by consistent rules throughout, it is not useful to convert such situations into part of a sociolinguistic description in terms of speech. Speech events are activities — two party conversations (face-to-face or on the telephone), lectures, introductions, religious rites, and the like— which are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech. Speech acts are the smallest units of this set (speech situation/event/act) we perform when we speak — e.g., giving reports, making statements, asking questions, giving warnings, making promises, approving, regretting (Schmidt & Richards, 1980).

Schmidt & Richards (1980) suggest some cautions concerning studies of speech

acts. Firstly, they question the validity of studies of isolated acts represented only by an individual sentence, primarily the verb. For example, Austin (1962, cited in Schmidt & Richards, 1980) claimed that there are over a thousand verbs such as "ask", "request", "require", "command", "beg", in English which perform speech/illocutionary acts. Furthermore, as Searle (1976) pointed out, in English, many verbs do not mark illocutionary force but mark other features of the speech act. For instance, "insist" and "suggest" do not mark separate speech acts or illocutionary points, but mark degree of intensity. They both may be used with directive function (e.g., "I suggest/insist that we go to the movies") or with representative function (e.g., "I suggest/insist that the answer is found on page 16") (Schmidt & Richards, 1980, p. 131).

They also suggest that it is important to recognize that speech acts are not identical with sentence, or grammatical description. Hymes (1972a) pointed out that the level of a speech act lies in between the level of grammar and the rest of a speech event, that is, a speech act involves both linguistic form and social norm. Thus, whether or not a particular utterance is a request may depend upon both a conventional linguistic formula, e.g., "How about picking me up early this afternoon?" and the social relationship between speaker and hearer.

Another caution Schmidt & Richards (1980) suggest is the recognition that speech acts occur within discourse and that the interpretation and negotiation of speech act force is often dependent on the discourse or transactional context. As a minimum, it is important to consider the fact that talk is often organized into two-part exchanges such as summons-answer, statement-reply, question-answer, and request-refusal of request. This organizing principle follows from very fundamental requirements of talk as a communication system. A speaker needs to know whether his message has been received and understood; a recipient needs to show that he has received and understood the message (Schmidt & Richards, 1980, p. 131).

An investigation of speech acts, therefore, naturally requires questions of act

sequencing (events) and contexts (speech settings or situations). Schmidt & Richards (1980) cite the study done by Rebein and Ehlich, quoted in Candlin (1978) which lists the different speech events within a speech situation of ordering a meal at a restaurant. Within this speech situation, there are many events, such as entering, looking around, taking a seat, asking for the menu, asking for information, consulting, deciding, ordering, eating, asking for the bill, getting/presenting the bill, accepting the bill, paying, leaving. Various parts of the sequence are identified by norms of linguistic behavior. Participants differ, for example, in the amounts of talking they do and topics they choose. There are, for example, rules for opening and closing sequences, sequencing rules, and distribution for particular speech acts. "Assigning the value 'command' to any of a range of possible utterances ('hot dog', 'that one', 'please bring me X', a deictic gesture) is a function of recognizing the social world of the restaurant with the rights, duties and social relationships between the participants, as well as being aware of the discoursal position of the 'act of commanding' within the transactional process"(Candlin, 1978, p. 17, cited in Schmidt & Richards, 1980, p. 131)

Brown & Levinson (1978) have articulated a theory of politeness which has received considerable attention in the study of speech acts. They make an assumption that all competent adult members of a society have "face"–"the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown & Levinson, p. 66)–which consists of "negative face" and "positive face". Negative face is defined as "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" and positive face as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others"(Brown & Levinson,1978, p. 67). Politeness is used to "redress" when performing face-threatening acts: "positive politeness" is used in response to the speaker's need to be recognized and appreciated, and "negative politeness" is used to minimize the imposition of a face-threatening act. In communication, speakers "express their intentions and make them known to hearers while balancing their positive face with that of the hearer's and while

imposing as little as possible upon the personal space of either" (Banerjee & Carrell, 1988, p. 316). The forms that linguistic expressions will take are motivated by the speaker's concerns with politeness, which vary according to the nature of the act itself and to variables such as social distance and relative power of the speaker and hearer. Thus, politeness seems to be one factor in selecting which linguistic expressions to use in performing a certain speech act.

Scotton (1983) proposes an interesting view that the linguistic code choice is governed by community norms that designate "specific code choice as the unmarked realization of a specific set of rights and obligations holding between a speaker and addressee" (Scotton, 1983, p. 115). She suggests the term "negotiation principle," patterned after Grice's "cooperative principle" (1975, cited in Scotton, 1983), to explain that the speaker chooses the form of his/her conversational contribution such that it symbolizes the set of rights and obligations which s/he wishes to be in force between speaker and the hearer in a talk exchange. In conventionalized exchanges, there is an unmarked or expected choice for both the medium and structure of the exchange. Members of a speech community show a consensus by producing unmarked choices more frequently than other possible choices.

C. Requests

One type of speech act proposed by Searle (1969) is "directive", commonly defined as an attempt to get hearers to carry out actions (or to refrain from carrying out actions). "Request" is one type of directive that is an inherently face-threatening-act (Brown & Levinson, 1978, pp. 71-71) because it imposes on the addressee's freedom of action, thus imposing on his or her negative face. The speaker tries to minimize the imposition as much as possible. However, no matter how hard one tries to take into account the affective variables which are thought to govern linguistic choice (such as role-relationship, size of task, expected task of the addressee), the resultant request can often

still seem somehow lacking in appropriateness (Scott, 1987, p.5).

Linguists have approached the study of requests from varied perspectives. Ervin-Tripp (1976) investigated American English directives and hypothesized a model for the choice of requests. Scarcella & Brunak (1981) included requests in their study of politeness strategies. Weigel & Weigel (1985) tested Ervin-Tripp's hypothesis by examining a migrant agricultural community. Jones (1992) examined directives in terms of speech context.

Contrastive analyses of requests in many different languages have been also done. Brown & Levinson (1978), and House & Kasper (1981) compared the use of politeness markers in English and German native speakers. Tanaka & Kawade (1982) investigated the use of politeness strategies in requests of Japanese speakers of English. Hill et al. (1986) investigated certain aspects of linguistic politeness in requests in Japanese and American English, and attempted a ranking of the politeness of request forms. Blum-Kulka (1987) examined the relationship between perceptions of indirectness and politeness of requests in American English and Hebrew. These studies present culture-specific features of discourse and provide further evidence for the claim that speech communities tend to develop culturally distinct interactional styles (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, p. 7).

Ervin-Tripp (1976), based on her empirical study, hypothesized six directive types determined by factors such as familiarity, age, authority, rights and duties, the difficulty of the task, the presence or absence of outsiders, territorial location, and task expectation as follows.

1. Need statements — used between persons differing in rank in transactional work settings where the expected task is very clear. A statement of need by a superior implies an obligation on the part of the subordinate (e.g., "I'll need a routine culture and a specimen"). They also occur in families (e.g., "I need a match").
2. Imperatives — used toward subordinates or familiar equals. They normally include a

verb and an object (when the verb is transitive) and a beneficiary (e.g., "Give me a match"). Elliptical forms specifying only the new information are produced when the necessary action is obvious (e.g., "A match"). There are four more structural variants to imperatives: (i)You + imperative (e.g., "You should turn right here, then you go straight"); (ii) attention-getters (e.g., "Here, you can run these in the book"); (iii) post-posed tags (e.g., "Carry some of these, will you?"); (iv) rising pitch.

3. Imbedded imperatives — used with unfamiliar people, people who differ in rank or who are physically distant, someone who is in his or her own territory, or someone whose willingness to comply is in doubt. These are forms where agent and object are explicit, with formal forms such as "could you" preceding an imperative (e.g., "Could you give me the paper?", "Why don't you open the window?"). A form is interpreted as a command when (i) it contains one of the modals "can", "could", "will", "would" (and sometimes "going to"), (ii) the subject of the clause is an addressee, e.g., "Can you keep your voices down", and (iii) the predicate describes an action which is physically possible at the time of utterance.
4. Permission directives — normally used by subordinates in addressing superiors, among unfamiliar people, and to people who might not comply. They are much like imbedded imperatives, but the focus is the beneficiary or recipient's activity (e.g., "May I have a match?", "Can I have my records back?").
5. Question directives — used when there is a possibility of non-compliance, giving the addressee an escape route by treating the question directive as if it were an information question (e.g., "Is there coffee left?", "Do you have some paper clips?"). If a negative tag question is posed, the questioner implies a greater than 50 percent chance that there will be a negative reply (e.g., "You don't happen to have any change for the phone, do you?").
6. Hints — used for persons with shared rules such as members of a family, people living together, and work groups. Many of them are very indirect and require

considerable knowledge of the situation to interpret as directives (e.g., "The matches are all gone.").

While Ervin-Tripp's model concerns syntactic forms expressed in single utterances, requests are not necessarily completed in one utterance. This point is illustrated in a study by Scott (1987). She noted:

> . . . one aspect of appropriateness might not simply be which particular linguistic items are chosen to realise a given illocutionary function, but how an utterance is sequentially positioned in the conversation . . . Pre-sequences can play a large part in orienting conversational participants to projected sequences and it seems to me that the appropriateness of any utterance could have much to do with its sequential placement and the overall conversation structure (pp. 6-7).

She further argued, from a pedagogical perspective, that if requests are indeed constructed interactionally, rather than by the choice of request utterance, the main objective of teaching should be for learners to establish certain ground-rules for appropriate conversational interaction themselves.

Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), in developing their request strategy types, included in their framework various modification strategies a speaker may use in making requests. One of them is "external modifications," which do not affect the utterance used for realizing the act but modify the context in which it is embedded. This analysis enables us to look beyond the single utterance of requests. These modifications are the following.

1. "Checking on availability" in which a speaker checks if the precondition necessary for compliance holds true ("Are you going in the direction of the town? And if so, it is possible to join you?").
2. "Getting a precommitment" in which a speaker attempt to obtain a precommital ("Will you do me a favor? Could you lend me your notes for a few days?").
3. "Grounder" in which a speaker indicates the reason for the request ("I missed class yesterday, could I borrow your notes?").
4. "Sweetener" in which a speaker tries to lowers the imposition by expressing

exaggerated appreciation of the addressee ("You have beautiful handwriting, would it be possible to borrow your notes?").

5. "Disarmer" in which a speaker indicates an awareness of a potential offense by attempting to anticipate possible refusal ("Excuse me, I hope you don't think I'm being forward, but is there any chance of a lift home?").
6. "Cost minimizer" in which a speaker indicates consideration of the "cost" of the compliance to the request by the addressee ("Pardon me, but could you give me a lift, if you're going my way, as I just missed the bus and there isn't another one for an hour").

While agreeing with the relevance of Scott's proposal that requests should be viewed in terms of sequential interaction, and taking into consideration external modifications in requests suggested by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), the notion of a requesting strategy in this paper is defined by the semantic form of the utterance, restricting "requests" to single utterances. This point is justified in that the major goal of this paper (the details will be discussed later) is to compare request forms used in authentic situations and the request forms presented in ESL textbooks, which are generally demonstrated as isolated semantic forms rather than sequentially and interactionally constructed discourse.

II. ESL MATERIALS AND AUTHENTICITY

A. Grammatical approach vs. communicative approach

In language teaching, a major consideration involves the basis on which we select the language that the learners will be exposed to and expected to acquire. For example, if learning a language is identified primarily as acquiring the grammatical system of the language, teaching may rely on a grammatical/structural syllabus. In this approach, popular in the 1950s and 60s, the different parts of language are taught separately, step-by-step, because acquisition is thought to be a process of gradual accumulation of the

parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up. The learner's task is to re-synthesize the language which has been broken down into a large number of small pieces with the purpose of making his learning easier. Only in the final stages of learning, is the language re-established as a whole in all its structural diversity (Wilkins, 1976, pp. 1-2).

One of the questions raised concerning a grammatical approach is that it may not be the most effective way of designing a language course; language learning is not complete when the content of a grammatical syllabus has been mastered. Reibel (1969, as cited in Wilkins, 1976) argues against the procedures of analysis leading to re-synthesis of elements of language structure:

> . . .we are taking the language behaviour and the language knowledge that we aim to produce in our learners, we are analysing the linguistic components of the desired performance and isolating its units. We are then teaching the units piece by piece so as to get back to the very position from which we started (p. 5).

Additionally, with contributions from applied linguistics (e.g., sociolinguistics, speech act theory), it became apparent that the grammatical (and lexical) meaning of a sentence as described in a grammatical syllabus does not always account for the way in which it is used as an utterance. For example, Widdowson (1971, cited in Wilkins, 1976, p. 10) points out that although imperatives are commonly thought of as a clear indicator of the act of commanding, this is not always the case: e.g., "Bake the pie in a slow oven", "Come for dinner tomorrow", "Take up his offer", "Forgive us our trespasses." These are an instruction, an invitation, advice and prayer, respectively. The same meanings can be realized by: "You must bake the pie in a slow oven", "Why don't you come to dinner tomorrow?", "I should take up his offer", "We pray for forgiveness of our trespasses", respectively. Similarly, in a grammatical syllabus, imperatives are commonly used when an order is to be realized. However, it is not the case in actual usage, as the examples of utterances of a teacher to his/her pupils suggest : "This should be done again", "You'll

have to do this again", "You can do better than this", "It's my job to get you to do better than this." The point is that language is understood not only through grammatical competence but also communicative and pragmatic competence. This means that the learner has to learn rules of communication as well as rules of grammar.

Thus, the communicative approach — also referred to as the notional-functional approach and the functional approach (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 66) — has become the now prominent methodology in language teaching. This approach is based on the theory that: 1) language is a system for the expression of meaning; 2) the primary function of language is for interaction and communication; 3) the structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses; and 4) the primary units of language are categories of functional and communicative meaning in discourse, not grammatical and structural features (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 71). In this approach, students regularly work, in groups or pairs, by transferring and negotiating meaning in activities where they are encouraged to communicate with each other to carry out tasks. Teachers are to help learners in any way that motivates students to work with language which students "create" through trial and error. The teacher's primary role is to facilitate communication, encouraging fluency. Unlike the grammatical approach, correction of errors is only secondary .

Along with the rise of the communicative approach, came the call for special-purpose language curricula with techniques specifically designed to prepare language learners such as scientists, businessmen, and engineers to cope with immediate demands of their fields. These new methods, replacing former grammar-based language curricula, started to include the use of "authentic materials", "realia", and "simulations" (Jacoby, 1994). Today, there seems to be a common feeling that authentic language materials will better provide learners the kinds of knowledge and skills that will enable them to function outside the classroom.

B. Call for authentic materials

Without question, the main goal of most modern language teaching is to enable learners to function outside the classroom, using language to achieve goals such as communicating, working, pursuing education. However, a common criticism of current methods is that students often have trouble transferring skills and knowledge taught in classrooms into their outside world. Crookall (1984, p. 262-3) noted that the language classroom lacks "reality and credibility." Porter & Roberts (1987) reported that learners have"never been allowed to come to grips with the language of the world outside"(p. 178). Wilkins (1979, cited in Rings, 1986, p. 79) argued that language learners "may be able to perform adequately in speech, but they frequently cannot understand what native speakers say to them. The fact is that they are not accustomed to hearing the language as it is produced by native speakers for native speakers."

How can we combat this problem? One challenge for us is to help students to develop skills in the classroom that are transferrable to the outside world by giving input that is real–the language that is actually used in the outside world. After all, they use language to express their feelings, exchange opinions, and get their needs met — not only to practice it in the classroom. Pearson & Lee (1992, p. 123) reported in their study of direction-giving that there was no difference in "opening sequence" or "question repeats" addressed to native-speakers and non-native speakers. This suggests that ESL learners will not automatically elicit comprehensible input merely because of their appearance or foreign accent . Scott (1987), suggesting the use of authentic language as teaching models, noted that shortcomings in appropriateness of utterances of non-native speakers are less tolerated by native speakers than syntactic or lexical mistakes. Therefore, problems with appropriateness risk being viewed as "evidence of a personal or psychological fault in the speaker rather than of a failure to cope with a genuine linguistic difficulty" (Crystal & Davy 1975, cited in Scott, 1987, p. 73). These reports particularly warn us of the need for arming learners for this severe reality. Using language models in

ESL textbooks that are real/authentic, or at least based on real language use, may help learners cope with the outside world.

Porter & Roberts (1987, pp. 177-8) reported that native speakers are able to distinguish recordings of listening texts for ESL purposes from natural language that is not prepared for teaching. According to them, common linguistic features of the ESL listening text include: "intonation" being marked by unusually wide and unusually frequent pitch-movement; "enunciation" without much assimilation and elision; "structural repetition" with obtrusive frequency; "complete sentences" rather than more natural sequences of loosely connected clauses; "distinct turn-taking," unlike authentic situations in which people often overlap; "attention signals" such as "uhuh" and "mm" not included; "formality" of syntax and lexis (i.e., swear-words never occur, and slang and other colloquial forms are rare); and "too much information," because speakers have so little shared knowledge, causing more explicit reference to objects, people and experiences than in authentic situations. Slade and Norris (1986) also pointed out discrepancies between real language use and ESL textbooks of casual conversation. They claimed that most of the language input in ESL materials is based on the author's intuition, not on analysis of real language data. In other words, ESL materials are informed by grammars of written language without taking account of the major features of spoken language, and situational context is reduced to a vehicle for the target function or structure. This is the reverse of the language role in real communication, where language is in fact the embodiment of the situation.

C. Definitions

However, despite the rising awareness of "authenticity," it is still unclear what this term really means and how to incorporate it in classroom teaching. Some feel that authentic texts are ones that are made to seem "real". For instance, Mollica (1979) suggested the following:

> Authors should make sure that dialogues are constructed around an experience compatible with the age and interests of the students [with their cultural background]; the language, therefore, should not be pedantic or unreal. It becomes the task of the teacher to clarify some of the cultural content, otherwise, they might assume what is said and done have exact counterparts in their own culture'(Mollica 1979, p. 162-3).

Others feel that authentic texts may be edited and changed for pedagogical purposes (Kruger, 1985, cited in Rings, 1986, p. 204). Some others feel that when the focus is on the content of communication, the language environment is natural even though the language may be simplified. For instance, Widdowson (1979, p. 165, cited in Jacoby, 1994) claimed that even a linguistically unnatural text can be authentic if the right set of response conventions are appropriately applied to realize the writer's intentions. Yet another view is that authentic language means unedited language that was produced by native speakers for native speakers. (See discussion of specific textbooks below on p. 33.) Thus, for Edelhoff (1981, cited in Jacoby, 1994), only authentic language in its original form can generate authentic communication (i.e., the ability to express, request, agree and disagree with real information, needs and opinions).

D. Use of authentic materials

Another consideration in the issue of authenticity is how much authenticity is most useful at which particular stages in the language learning process. This again, like the definition of authenticity itself, engenders considerable disagreement. Some linguists express reservations about the use of authentic materials. Allen & Widdowson (1974, cited in Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 158) defended the use of composed texts in order to "avoid syntactic complexity" and to "'foreground' features of language which have particular communicative value." Geddes & White (1978) argued that unedited authentic discourse may panic learners who find themselves faced with the speed of delivery and mixture of known and unknown vocabulary and syntax. Consequently, they suggested

the use of "language produced for a pedagogical purpose, but exhibiting features which have a high probability of occurrence in genuine acts of communication" (Geddes &White, 1978, p. 137). Many features of "caretaker" speech, such as simplified structures, shorter utterances, repeated questions, rephrasings, and slower rate of production, are all aimed at comprehension, on the part of both the child and the caretaker. This may translate to the learner-teacher equation, suggesting some reservations about the use of authentic materials for all levels of learners. In fact, many researchers and teachers do feel a language sample needs control and modification. However, how much and what sort of intervention is needed is still controversial.

Meyer (1984) claimed that even low level students, as early as the first day, can be taught to listen selectively for specific information. They can preview what they are about to hear by reading written questions beforehand. The clues from the questions activate the right schema and bring about the expectancy needed to select the particular information they are looking for. As the students progress, the questions very gradually supply fewer clues and require more informational feedback. The purposes of such listening exercises (similar to scanning activities for reading) are "to enhance students' expectancy and to teach them to extract high-information items from a natural and redundant environment" (Meyer, 1984, p. 343). Slade & Norris (1986), in writing language textbooks based on taped casual conversations and interviews with real people, sequenced the transcripts (both authentic and simulated) according to an agenda of both conversational strategies and topics (thus, using some transcripts more than once). They advise the users of their textbooks to develop their own sequences, such as selecting the transcript version most appropriate for learner level, ordering by length and conversational complexity, and beginning with the interviews rather than the casual conversations, to provide background on individuals appearing in the conversations in the textbook. Anderson (1987a, cited in Jacoby, 1994) suggests sequencing of authentic materials according to "the occurrence of high frequency lexis or structure, less frequent

but important linguistic features and by a scale of need (general use before specialized use)".

E. Previous studies on comparisons between authentic language use and ESL textbooks

In recent years, several empirical studies have been conducted investigating authentic use of language in comparison to the presentation of language in ESL textbooks or grammar books. Scotton & Bernsten (1988) investigated direction-giving and directive use in service encounters. The study showed that directions were extremely uniform in structure, and contained other parts besides requests for directions and the actual directions, and that directive forms vary across situations. They argued that these are not characteristics presented in ESL textbooks. For instance, the dialogues below, taken from both ESL textbooks and actual direction-givings, illustrate that naturally-occurring dialogues contain, in addition to actual directions, many other parts such as "structural non-fluencies" (e.g., fillers) and incomplete sentences (Scotton & Bernsten 1988, p. 375).

[Composed] Dialogue 1. "Asking and giving directions" from Notion by Notion (Ferreira, 1981, cited in Scotton & Bernsten, 1988):

S1: Excuse me, how can I get to the post office from here?
S2: Cross University Avenue. Turn right. Walk straight ahead along University Avenue for three blocks. Turn left at Church Street. Walk south for two blocks. Turn left at Avenue. The post office is the big building on the corner of Bridge Avenue and Church Street.
S1: Thank you for your help.

[Composed] Dialogue 2. Lifelines 3, Coping Skills in English (Faley & Pomann, 1982, cited in Scotton & Bernsten, 1988):

Miguel: Can you tell me where the court house is?

Officer: Sure. Go up this street three blocks to Mera Avenue and make a left at the second stop sign. That's Alemeda Street. The court house is three blocks down on the left.

Miguel: That's right at Mera and a left at Alemeda.

Officer: That's it.

Miguel: Thank you.

[Authentic] Dialogue 3. Audio-taped natural conversation: Michigan State University:

S1: How do I get to the Vet Clinic?

S2: The Vet Clinic? Oh man, it's a haul (pause) Uh, okay. Go up to the bridge, and that's on Farm Lane. And you want to go right all the way up until you pass—um. Do you know where—um. Are you familiar with the campus?

S1: Pretty much.

S2: Do you know where the (pause) Uh Agriculture Hall is?

S1: Yeah, I know.

S2: Okay. When you see the Agriculture Hall, it will be on your right hand side. You want to go left again towards Akers. Then the Vet Clinic should be on that road, and it says Vet Clinic.

S1: It does?

S2: Yeah. You can't miss it. It should be just past the intersection of Bogue Street and the street you'll be on (rising intonation).

S1: Okay.

S2: All right.

S1: Thank you very much.

Other studies have investigated actual language use and the language presented in ESL textbooks. Taborn (1983) investigated everyday transactions of buying and selling, and found that these dialogues are typically short, grammatically and semantically simple, and largely predictable in structure. In contrast, what is presented in textbooks is very often lacking in these respects, thus having very little transfer value to authentic

situations. Scott (1987) examined request sequences in telephone conversations and claimed that ESL materials are lacking in respect to sequential context and the compliance status of requests in conjunction with the interactional framework of request sequences. Bland (1988) compared certain uses of the present progressive in informal spoken English with usage presented in ESL textbooks, and indicated discrepancies. Doctor-patient interaction was investigated by Cathcart (1989) who found discrepancies between ESL textbooks and actual usage in terms of distribution of topics, utterance functions, and structures.

All of these studies reveal that there are clear differences between actual language use and what is presented in ESL textbooks for learners. It is further argued that the learners may not benefit from language learning classrooms unless ESL textbooks present what they can transfer to authentic situations. Specific differences between textbook language and the actual language of requests will be discussed below (p. 33).

III. THE STUDY

This section presents the request utterances collected at service counters at Southern Illinois University and compares these to request forms presented in ESL textbooks. My objectives are threefold: (1) to examine types of requests used at service counters at an American university; (2) to determine any differences between native-speaker and non-native speaker requests; and (3) to compare request forms used by native-speakers to those presented in ESL textbooks.

A. Subjects & procedures

The data were collected in the Linguistics Department main office and a service counter in a campus housing office. These sites shared the following characteristics: 1) expected tasks of request recipients were fairly clear; and 2) they served mainly students. The majority of subjects at the Linguistics Office were graduate students (both native and

non-native speakers) in the department. Other subjects included Linguistics professors, and Linguistics undergraduates, and international students enrolled in English composition courses required for non-native speakers. The subjects at the housing office were residents—either students themselves or spouses of students.

The data were obtained systematically by writing down all identifiable requests as they occured. Data collection was anonymous, but the secretary and receptionists were all informed of the data collection. While Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) are often used in the study of speech acts, what speakers think they say is often different from what they actually say in spontaneous conversation. For this reason, observational study of natural conversation was chosen. However, it should be noted that this too has its disadvantages; it is difficult to control many variables which may affect utterances. Fortunately, being a student in the Linguistics Department and a resident of campus housing myself, I was able to gauge variables such as familiarity and status of the subjects in many cases. One hundred and twenty utterances were collected during the period of October 1993 to February 1994.

One limitation of this study is that utterances were written down rather than being audio-taped. Audio-taping would have enabled me to examine detailed linguistic features such as intonation, stress, pause, hedges, and overlaps. Also, there might have been subconscious editing of data at the time of recording. It was not possible to make a detailed record of request sequences, including opening, pre-requests, and closing, which might have enabled me to investigate some interactional aspects of request making.

B. Data analysis and discussion

All data were transcribed and categorized following the system of Scotton & Bernsten (1988).

Directive Types were categorized as :

1. Need statements — e.g., "I need X.", "I want you to X."

2. Mitigated need statements — e.g., "I would like . . ."

3. Imperatives— e.g., "A pen."

4. Imbedded imperatives — e.g., "Could you X?", "Why don't you X?"

5. Permission directives — e.g., "May I have X?", "Can I have X?"

6. Question directives — e.g., "Is there X?", "Do you have X?", "You don't happen to have X, do you?"

7. Hints — e.g., "I'm leaving at 2:00." (=Hurry up!).

The number and type of utterances are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Request types of native speaker (NS) and non-native speakers(NNS) utterances

	NS utterances (n = 69)		NNS utterances (n = 51)	
	no. of utterances	% of total	no. of utterances	% of total
1. Need statements	17	24.6 %	10	19.6 %
2. Mitigated need statements	1	1.5 %	6	11.8 %
3. Imperatives	1	1.5 %	0	0 %
4. Imbedded imperatives	4	5.8 %	2	3.9 %
5. Permission directives	13	18.8 %	14	27.4 %
6. Question directives	23	33.3 %	14	27.4 %
7. Hints	10	14.5 %	5	9.8 %

1. Native-speaker request types

Need statements:

Among native speaker request types, 24.6 % were need statements. This type was commonly used by professors, who had a higher status than the secretary. It was also used to ask for physical objects in the secretary's desk drawer— e.g., the reading room key, the conference room key, a paper clip—so the task difficulty was very low:

a. Requests by professor to the secretary in Linguistics office:

1. "I need a video for (a class) for Friday."

2. "[name], I need help."

b. Requests for physical objects in the secretary's desk drawer:

3. "I need the conference room key."

4. "I need the reading room key."

5. "I need a paper clip."

Mitigated need statements:

This type was very rare (1.5%) The only mitigated need statement found was used by a new professor, to the secretary in the Linguistics office:

6. "I would like an application for X, please."

Note that professors commonly used need statements in asking for items within the secretary's reach. The professor who used this form was new to the department, whereas the other professors who used need statements had been in the department much longer. Perhaps familiarity between speaker and listener affected the choice.

Imperatives:

Only one (1.5%) native speaker request was imperative. It was used by a student who rushed into the Linguistics office saying to the secretary:

7. "Tape, tape!"

The secretary later informed me that she found this unusual but amusing.

Imbedded imperatives:

There were only three utterances of this type (5.8%).

a. Two were directed by professors to the secretary:

8. "Do you know [a form]?" [pre-request] "Can you type one for me?"

9. "Can you make a copy of these?"

b. One was used by a student worker to the secretary in the Linguistics office:

10. "If you see [name], could you remind him the computers are on."

The imbedded imperative, e.g., "Can you . . ." is a listener–oriented request which is more imposing than the speaker–oriented request such as the permission directive, eg., "Can I . . .". Not naming the hearer as actor in speaker–oriented requests can reduce the level of coerciveness (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, p. 19). Imbedded imperatives are commonly presented in ESL textbooks as polite request forms, but they were rarely found in this study. However, degree of politeness may not be the only determining factor in this case. It may be that the tasks required in the data simply did not elicit this type of request.

Permission directives:

Of native speaker requests, 18.8% were need statements. Most permission directive types were used by graduate students. Many utterances of this type were used to ask for the very same things for which professors and a few other students used need statements. Some examples of this type involved action on the part of the speaker.

a. Requests by Linguistics graduate students asking for physical objects in the secretary's desk drawer:

11. "Could I borrow the conference room key?"

12. "May I have a reading room key?"

13. "Could I grab a writing room key?"

14. "Can I use a stapler?"

b. Requests involving action on the part of the speaker:

15. "Can I make a copy of this?"

16. "Can I see this catalog?"

Question directives:

This type was most common (33.3%) among native speakers. Graduate students in the Linguistics office accounted for most of these (20 out of 23 utterances). Three such utterances were made by professors. As noted above, question directives are indirect requests which give "the listener who does not want to comply an escape route, by treating the question directive as if it were an information question" (Ervin-Tripp, 1976, p. 38). Some of these requests ended in non-compliance; that is, the speakers did not get what they asked for (or were given other options in some cases).

a. Requests which ended in non-compliance (e.g., "Sorry, I don't have it"):

17. "Is there a list of advisors for this semester?"

18. "You don't know a good place that I can get (a thing), do you?"

19. "Do you know if there's a big campus map?"

20. "Do you have one of our teaching logs?"

Some other requests contained overt expressions of expectations of non-compliance from the hearer.

b. Requests containing indications of speaker's expectation of non-compliance:

21. "You don't know a good place that I can get [a thing], do you?"

22. "Would you happen to have an address for [name of other student]?"

23. "Do we have a dust cloth or something?"

The question directive was used in requests for both physical objects and information.

Hints:

This type was less frequent (14.5%). Ervin-Tripp (1976) noted that hints are not on-the-surface directives; thus, they are easy to ignore, leaving options for compliance wide open.

24. "I came to pick up a VCR." (i.e., "Give me the VCR I reserved.") [by resident, who had reserved a VCR earlier, to receptionist at housing office]

25. "I have a question about homework." (i.e., "Answer my question concerning homework.") [by Linguistics graduate student to professor]

26. "I'm going to Dr. X's office for a second." (i.e., "Take care of things while I'm gone.")[Secretary addressing student worker in Linguistic office]

As Ervin-Tripp suggested, hints seemed to be used when: (i) the necessary acts are very clear, as in (#24) and (#26), and a service is special and the speaker is reluctant to be explicit, as in (#25).

2. Non-native speaker request types

Need statements:

Of non-native speaker requests, 19.6% were of this type. However, the expression "I want...." (7 out of 10) was more common than "I need...." (3 out of 10).

a. All the "I need...." forms were used by Linguistics graduate students:

27. "I need a few of those forms that [professor] had printed for us."

28. "Hi, I think [name] is my advisor." [pre-request] "I need someone to sign my slip."

29. "I need to talk to you sometime."

b. All of the "I want" forms except one(#30) were used by students who were taking English courses for non-native speakers, to either the secretary or the course supervisor:

30. "I want to return the key." [by a Linguistics graduate student]

31. "I want to get the proficiency test result."

32. "I want to ask you where [name of T.A.] is."

33. "I want to go to morning, whatever morning."

34. "I want to change the section."

35. "I want Monday, Wednesday, Friday class."

Thus, graduate student used "I need" and students in English courses used "I want". At least, two possible reasons could account for this result. Non-native graduate students of

Linguistics might have had a higher command of English compared to other students in the data, thus, avoiding the blunt form "I want", or, the latter context elicited more "I want" forms.

Mitigated need statements:

Of non-native speaker requests, 11.8% were of this type. All except one such request were made by students who were (or were planning to be) enrolled in English composition courses for non-native speakers.

a. Requests by students in English composition for non-native speakers to secretary in Linguistics office:

36. "I'd like a closed-class card for 290."

37. "I would like to contact [name of T.A.]."

38. "I would like to know who teaches what class."

b. Only one "I would like" was used by Linguistics graduate student:

39. "I would like to know the list of classes that I need in order to graduate."

Mitigated need statements were used to ask for both information (4 out of 6) and physical objects (2 out of 6).

Imperatives:

This request type was not found among non-native speaker requests.

Imbedded imperatives:

This request type was very rare (3.9%).

a. One was used by a student to the course supervisor:

40. "Excuse me, can you check the section number?" [clarifying the mix-up of sections].

b. The other was used by a student to the secretary in Linguistics office:

41. "I'm studying X. I need to interview people." [pre-requests] "Could you please answer my questions?"

Utterance (#41) included explicit pre-requests (external modification) which were used to qualify the "imposing" speaker–oriented request that followed.

Permission directives:

This type was the most common request (27.4%) along with question directives (27.4%). Permission directives were typically used to ask for things. They were also used in requests involving action by the speaker.

a. Requests for physical objects by Linguistics graduate students to secretary :

42. "[name], can I use the phone?"

43. "Can I have the conference room key?"

44. "Can I have a key for the reading room?"

45. "Can I get a key?" [Reply: "A key for what?"] "For the reading room."

b. Requests for physical objects by residents to receptionists at housing office:

46. "Can I have a vacuum cleaner?"

47. "Can I use tape?"

48. "Can I buy one of those laundry card?"

c. Requests involving action by the speaker by graduate student:

49. "May I have a look at this?"

d. Requests involving action by the speaker by students in English course for non-native speakers to the course advisor:

50. "May I go there to see the class schedule?"

51. "There's a problem. My class is always overtime."[pre-requests] "Can I change it to section [#]? I'm sorry about that."

52. "Can I go outside to look?"

Non-native speakers preferred the form "Can I . . ." (11 out of 14) to the forms "Could

I . . ." (1 out of 14) and "May I . . ." (2 out of 14).

Question directives:

Of non-native speaker requests, 27.4% were of this type. Among the examples, some expressions explicitly indicated an expectation of non-compliance.

a. Requests indicating anticipation of refusal:

53. "Do you have a VCR by any chance?" [by resident to receptionist at housing office]

54. "A paper bag, you don't have it?" [by student working for campus housing]

Hints:

This type was rare(9.8%) :

55. "I asked for a vacuum cleaner." (i.e., "Give me a vacuum cleaner.") [by a resident, who had came earlier but was told to come back, to receptionist at housing office]

56. "I reserved a sewing machine." (i.e., "Give me the sewing machine I reserved.") [by a resident, who had reserved a sewing machine, to a receptionist at the housing office]

57. "I turned off the heater but it's still on." (i.e., "Check/fix the heater.") [by a resident to receptionist at housing office]

All these hints occurred in situations where the necessary actions on the part of the hearers were very clear.

3. Differences between native speaker and non-native speaker requests

The major difference between native speakers and non-native speaker use of requests was found in the use of the mitigated need statements. Of non-native speaker requests, 11.8% were of this type, as opposed to only 1.5 % of native speaker requests.

Whereas the one native speaker request of this type was used to ask for a physical object, some non-native speaker requests of this type were used to ask for information. It is possible that native-speaker students might chose a different type, such as the question directive, for asking for information. Although no requests in which native speakers and non-native speakers asked for exactly the same thing, were found, many were very comparable.

a. Comparison of NS and NNS requests for personal information:

[Non-native speaker]

58. "I would like to contact [TA]."

59. "I'd like to know what the room number of [TA]."

[Native speaker]

60. "Do you happen to have an address for [name]."

b. Comparison of NS and NNS requests for information on classes or advisors:

[Non-native speaker]

61. "I would like to know the list of classes that I need in order to graduate."

[Native speaker]:

62. "Is there a list of advisors for this semester?"

It is possible that native speakers used more indirect forms, such as question directives, than non-native speakers in certain contexts, such as asking for information at service counters in a university.

This difference in the use of question directives seems to support the claim that native speakers may prefer more indirect requests than non-native speakers do. The question directive was the most preferred request type among native speakers (33.3%), whereas question directives (24.6%) and permission directives (24.6%) were equally common in non-native speaker requests. Question directives are more indirect than permission directives, because they allow listeners the option of treating the utterances as simple questions. Non-native speakers may have used fewer question directives either

because they were unaware of such distinctions in degree of politeness, or simply because they did not have the knowledge to use such forms, thus using other request types, such as mitigated need statements.

Another major difference was found in the use of permission directives. In phrasing requests, a speaker chooses a perspective for his/her request; permission directives are speaker- oriented requests, emphasizing the speaker's role as a recipient. Non-native speakers used permission directives more than native speakers did (27.4% vs. 18.8%). However, the difference was also found not only in the frequency of, but in the types within, the permission directives. Only 7% of permission directives used by non-native speakers included the form "Could I" whereas 30.8% of native speakers' did. Whereas 78.6% of permission directives by non-native speakers contained the form "Can I", 53.8% by native speakers did. The difference can be seen more clearly when limiting comparison to requests for keys to the secretary in the Linguistics office.

a. Comparison of NS and NNS requests for keys to the secretary in Linguistics office:

[Non-native speakers]

63. "Can I have the conference room key?"

64. "Can I have a key for the reading room?"

65. "Can I get a key?" [Reply: "A key for what?"] "For the reading room."

66. "Can I have a reading room key?"

[Native speakers]

67. "Can we get a reading room key from somewhere in here?"

68. "Could I borrow the conference key?"

69. "Could I grab a writing room key?"

70. "May I have a reading room key?"

71. "May I have a key to the reading room?"

As the examples indicate, all requests used by non-native speakers contained "can", whereas native speakers used "can", "could" and "may". The modals "may", "could"

and "can" indicate the degree of politeness: the former most polite and the latter, least. According to the data, non-native speakers used the least polite form, "can", more than native speakers did.

Another difference between native and non-native speakers was seen in need statements. Seventy percent of the need statements used by non-native speakers contained "I want" while only 5.9% of native speakers' did. However, this might be attributable to several variables. One possibility is that the different tasks may elicit different forms, i.e., the form "I want" was not used in requests for physical objects:

a. Request for information or request involving action on the part of the speaker:

72. "I want to ask you where [name] is."

73. "I want to change the section."

On the other hand, the form "I need" was mostly used for requests for physical objects.

b. Request for physical objects:

74. "I need a few of those forms that [name] had printed for us."

75. "I need a reading room key."

The difference in native and non-native speaker usage found here may be due simply to the fact the native speakers were typically asking for physical objects, whereas non-native speakers were asking for either information or action. Another contributing factor may be that among the need statements of native speakers, 53% involved professors making requests of the secretary. Professors might have thus used the form "I need" more frequently, because their social status is clearly higher than the secretary's.

Comparing native and non-speaker requests, we see that their request patterns were different. Native speakers may prefer indirect requests more than non-native speakers, thus making non-native speakers appear less polite by comparison. Whether this stems from differences in politeness strategies, as suggested by many linguists (e.g., Tanaka & Kawade, 1982), misjudging the unmarked choice (Scotton & Bernsten, 1988), or inaccurate models in ESL textbooks, cannot be answered from this study alone. Further

studies must be conducted before any strong claim can be made about how and why native and non-native speakers differ in their use of requests.

4. Requests in selected ESL textbooks

Most ESL textbooks based on a functional approach include a chapter such as "making requests". However, their approaches to the presentation of requests vary. In textbooks attempting to integrate communicative functions and grammar, utterances selected for simultaneous presentation of a particular function and a particular grammar point are necessarily limited to those utterances that fall within both categories. Others, strictly adhering to functions of language, introduce a variety of utterances at one time, unconstrained by grammatical considerations. In order to compare authentic request utterances with those presented in ESL textbooks, I selected four textbooks; Interchange 2 (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 1991a), Interchange 3 (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 1991b), Functions of American English (Jones & von Baeyer, 1983), and Say It Naturally (Wall, 1987). These were selected because they emphasize facilitating learners' communicative competence, and their contents are categorized by functions of language such as "Giving directions" and "Making requests."

In Interchange 2's chapter on "Making requests" (Chapter 6, p. 34-35), grammar points — imperatives and modals — dictate the request forms presented:

Turn the TV down.	Can you turn the TV down?
Leave the door open.	Could you leave the door open, please?
Please keep the noise down.	Would you please keep the noise down?
Move you car, please.	Would you mind moving your car?
Please don't park here.	Would you mind not parking here, please?

(Interchange 2, p. 35)

With grammar elements the point of departure, imperatives (with or without "please")

and imbedded imperatives are the only request forms introduced in this chapter. While the selection of only two types of request form at one stage may be pedagogically motivated (i.e., selecting a level of syntactic structure appropriate for learners, and avoiding input overload), it may be a disservice for learners in another way. For instance, we saw in the study that imperatives and imbedded imperatives as presented in Interchange 2 were in fact rarely used by subjects. Furthermore, although imperatives are commonly thought of as commands (requests), this is not always the case (see discussion above on p. 12); imperatives are also commonly used as instructions, invitations, or advice in actual communication. As Widdowson (1978) suggested, a sentence might be appropriate in one particular context by virtue of its grammatical form, but still not be appropriate in function. Thus, introducing imperatives as requests to learners may be misleading, that is, learners may use imperatives in requests when other forms would be more appropriate and expected.

Interchange 3 (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 1991b), intended to extend the skills and knowledge learned in Interchange 2, presents requests with modals (imbedded imperatives) and "if"-clause, in hierarchy of informality:

Less	Can you please lend me $100?
formal	Could you let me use your car?
|	Would you be able to mail this letter?
|	Would you mind letting me use your Walkman?
|	Would it be OK if I borrowed your car?
Most	Would you mind if I used it?
formal	I wonder if you'd mind lending me your cassette player.

(Interchange 3, p. 29)

As in the case of Interchange 2, a limited number of request utterances are introduced, when compared to requests found in the study. The need statement (e.g., "I need a clip"), the mitigated need statement (e.g., "I would like a paper clip"), and the permission

directive (e.g., "Could I borrow a pen?") are not presented in this textbook. Questions also arise concerning the assigning of explicit levels of politeness. Judging request politeness according to modal choice ignores the meaning difference associated with "request perspective" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 203). Speaker-oriented utterances are less imposing than hearer-oriented ones. Therefore, "Can I borrow your car?" is less imposing (thus, more polite) than "Could you lend me your car?" even though the textbook presents "could" as more polite than "can". It should be noted that the imbedded request forms "Can /Could/Would you . . .", presented in the textbook were very rarely seen in the data.

Since Interchange 3 is designed to build on Interchange 2, it provides a wider range of request forms (including the imbedded imperative presented in Interchange 2). Interchange 3 eliminates direct imperatives from its list of requests; it also presents explicit degrees of politeness. Although Interchange 3, overall, is more inclusive, both the absence of some common utterances and the presence of some potentially misleading elements remain difficulties.

Functions of American English presents a fairly complete selection of request forms in purely functional terms. Like Interchange 3, it presents utterances according to politeness/formality (the more stars, the more polite):

* Hey, I need some change.
I'm all out of change.
** You don't have a quarter, do you?
Have you got a quarter, by any chance?
Could I borrow a quarter?
*** You couldn't lend me a dollar, could you?
Do you think you could lend me a dollar?
I wonder if you could lend me a dollar.
**** Would you mind lending me five dollars?
If you could lend me five dollars, I'd be very grateful.

***** Could you possibly lend me your typewriter?

Do you think you could possibly lend me your typewriter?

I wonder if you could possibly lend me you typewriter.

****** I hope you don't mind my asking, but I wonder if it might be at all possible for you to lend me your car.

(Functions of American English, p. 17)

While this is an impressive list of request types, questions arise concerning some sentences. For example, take these two sentences:

** Could I borrow a quarter?

***** Could you possibly lend me your typewriter?

First of all, the difference in politeness may not be as great as indicated (** vs. *****). What makes them different is the word "possibly"; indeed, if "possibly" is taken away, the "Could I borrow a quarter?" is more polite than "Could you possibly lend me your typewriter?" because the former is a speaker-oriented request, lessening coerciveness by making the speaker the focus of the act. Furthermore, the textbook lacks overt explanations on the use of syntactic downgraders (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) such as "possibly", "perhaps", "a bit". Although downgraders were found in only two utterances in the data, e.g., "I just need to leave a message." and "I just need to put this here for a moment", they are important linguistic elements in controlling politeness of utterances.

Functions of American English presents explicit rules for usage to promote appropriate politeness (neither too polite nor too rude). The authors present the variables which control politeness as:

a) how difficult, unpleasant, or urgent the task is

b) who you are and who you are talking to (p. 16)

These variables are seen in the data as well: (i) the status of the speaker affected the choice of request types, e.g., "I need. . ." by professors; (ii) asking for objects close at hand to the hearer elicited less polite forms than asking for information, e.g., "Can I have

the reading room key." vs. "You don't know a good place that I can get [thing], do you?". Thus, the textbook's guidelines are supported by the study data.

This textbook provides various communicative activities, encouraging learners to consider the variables involved when choosing utterances . It also includes dialogues which provide contexts for the request forms that are presented.

Say It Naturally starts out by introducing request forms used in emergencies, such as a thief stealing someone's handbag or a dinner companion suddenly choking and starting to gasp for breath:

> Help! I've been robbed!
> Help me! Stop that thief!
> Quick! Don't let that man get away! He stole my wallet!
>
> Help! He's choking! Does anyone know the Heimlich maneuver?
> Help me! Is there a doctor? It's an emergency!
> Someone! Quick! Bet a doctor! He's choking!
>
> (Say It Naturally, p. 243)

This textbook emphasizes that in emergencies, being direct and explicit is very important. Then it explains that if the situation is not as dangerous and doesn't require emergency action, a calmer and more polite request is required. The textbook lists some "common ways to begin requests for assistance" with special attention to the use of modals:

> If it's not too much trouble, could you . . . ?
> Could I impose on you to . . . ?
> Could I ask you a favor? Would you . . . ?
> I hope you don't mind, but could . . . ?
> Would you mind helping me / doing something for me?
> I have a favor to ask. Would you . . .?
> Could you help me / lend me a hand?
> Would you . . .

Can you . . .
Will you . . .
How about assisting me with . . . ?

(Say It Naturally, p. 245)

However, the textbook also lacks request forms seen in the study (e.g., need statements, question directives). Furthermore, it deals with only a narrow range of requested tasks (e.g., requests for assistance, not objects or information); thus, the forms required are all rather polite. No indication is given that the choice of polite expression changes with the difficulty of the requested task.

Comparing request forms found in the four ESL textbooks with the forms in the data, we see that only Functions of American English presents all the request types found in the data. Most strikingly, the question directive — the most common request type for native speakers — was not even introduced in three of the four textbooks. Since question directives are not, on the surface, explicitly requests, ESL material developers may fail to include them with the others. Alternately, non-explicit directives such as question directives and hints may be considered hard for learners, demanding extensive knowledge of contexts and pragmatics. Selection of request forms in textbooks, thus, appears to often be based on considerations of grammatical form, native speaker judgements as to relative levels of politeness, and appropriateness rather than on actual native speaker usage.

Additionally, balancing grammatical difficulty and pragmatic frequency in language teaching is an important but difficult issue. When utterances are graded and selected based on structural criteria without consideration of pragmatic frequency within a particular functional domain, there is a great potential for confusion on the part of learners. The confused learners may produce pragmatically inappropriate utterance, e.g., "Give me your pen" when he/she actually wants to convey a more polite request, "Could I borrow your pen for a second." Alternately, they might produce overly polite utterances

such as "I have a favor to ask. Would you mind getting me a paper clip" when taking to a secretary who has paper clips right in front of him/her. Learners need pragmatic as well as linguistic knowledge for communicative competence. They need to be exposed, in the classroom, to actual language use, as well as to grammatical usage of language, rather than being left to combine actual language use and grammar.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In a study of request types employed at two service counters at Southern Illinois University—Carbondale, native and non-native speakers differed in their use of requests. While native speakers used question directives significantly more than the other request types, non-native speakers did not show such a preference. Non-native speakers chose question directives and permission directives equally. Mitigated need statements were used by non-native speakers more than by native speakers. These differences may have been caused by the fact that native speakers used indirect request types such as question directives when asking for information rather than mitigated need statements as non-native speakers did.

In designing ESL materials, utterances are often selected in terms of structural similarity or linguistic complexity. The selection of utterances should, instead, be based on their potential usefulness to learners in accomplishing their functional purposes. Thus, using this criteria, materials of a particular function may contain linguistic elements which are not necessarily structurally similar. In suggesting this, Widdowson (1978) noted that the entire range of such utterances are not necessarily to be taught for productive purposes. However, if these utterances will be encountered frequently, they need to be recognized by learners for their shared meaning.

Evaluation of four ESL textbooks revealed that a wide range of request types used in authentic conversation were seldom included and that there was not enough clear explanation of variables affecting the choice of request type. Additionally, when a

limited number of forms was introduced, they did not necessarily represent the most common forms used in actual conversation; e.g., imbedded directives, commonly introduced in ESL textbooks, were rarely used by either native or non-native speakers.

While the small sample and uncontrolled variables in this study prevent us from making sweeping claims about request use in authentic conversation, the study does suggest that: (1) native speakers prefer certain request types over others; (2) native and non-native speakers may use different request types in similar contexts; and (3) discrepancies exist between authentic request use and the presentation of request types in ESL textbooks.

In order to facilitate classroom language learning most effectively and efficiently, we need to consider many factors; e.g., language theory, learning theory, fundamental reasons for language use, and the goal of learners, choice of materials. In this paper, I looked at one of these, that is, authenticity of ESL materials. Controlling levels of input for learners seems to make sense pedagogically. However, there are a few things we need to consider in doing so. As Seidlhofer & Widdowson (1994) pointed out it is the responsibility of a teacher/textbook to provide as complete and accurate a summary , e.g., of a rule, as possible. Since this is almost never the "whole story," it is also the responsibility of the teacher/textbook to specify this fact. For example, in presenting request forms, it should be noted that the forms given are selected (on the basis of grammatical form, or politeness) but are <u>not</u> a complete list of possible appropriate request forms.

It is also important to consider pragmatic frequency and appropriateness of particular functional utterances in actual language use when controlling input. We need to be cautious about introducing "mismatched" grammar and functions (e.g., imperatives as request forms), especially to low level learners who may not have enough linguistic and pragmatic competence to select appropriate utterances from a wide range of possible choices. Utterances in ESL textbooks often seem to be selected according to native

speaker intuition and grammatical forms rather than authentic language use. If the primary goal of language teaching is to enable learners to function outside the classroom as effectively and efficiently as possible, teaching materials should reflect what goes on in the real world, preparing learners as much as possible to deal with real language, even at low levels.

Competent language learners should be able to produce utterances that are both linguistically and pragmatically appropriate. After all, communication is a means for smooth social interaction between people, not just a means to achieve wants and desires. The results of this study may (as some other studies already have) call into question the criteria for presentation of utterances employed in many current ESL textbooks.

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SIUC HSC Form A

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PROJECT TITLE: The Use of Directives in Authentic Request-making Situations.

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Toyoko Y. Schmidt — 7-6-1993

RESEARCHER(S) or PROJECT DIRECTORS — DATE

Please print or type out name below signature

Lise Winer — 6 July 1993

RESEARCHER'S ADVISOR (required for all student projects) — DATE

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The request submitted by the above researcher(s) was approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee.

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CHAIRPERSON, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE — DATE

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Research Report Title:

Authenticity in ESL: A study of requests

Major Professor: Dr. Lise Winer